

**2018 Charter School Request for Proposals and  
Application Guide  
For Potential Charter Operators Opening a School in  
2019**



**METRO  
NASHVILLE  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS**

*Exceeding Great Expectations*

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## **Charter Schools Opening for the 2018-19 School Year**

**The vision of the MNPS Office of Charter Schools is a world where all children and communities are empowered through exemplary public schools, and our mission is to authorize excellent public schools that change lives.**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this guidance is to enhance the clarity and utility of critical information for potential applicants. It is strongly recommended that applicants read through all the guidelines and use them in developing their responses to the charter application. The Office of Charter Schools staff and review teams consider all elements of the guidance when assessing the quality of proposals.

MNPS seeks charter school applications to cultivate strong school capacity in order to provide high quality academic instruction for all students. The purpose of MNPS charter schools is to advance the district's vision for excellence and diversity while meeting the needs of a growing city for new school capacity. Therefore, this call for proposals is shaped by analysis of the academic performance of schools, and the diversity goals of the MNPS Diversity Management Plan (**Appendix A - Diversity Management Plan**).

The analysis of these factors suggests that MNPS seek new school proposals that offer one or more of the following:

1. Advance academic achievement for students currently enrolled in schools that underperform (Review and Target) over multiple years on the Academic Performance Framework (APF).
2. Add to and do not diminish the number of schools with student enrollment diversity in Nashville.
3. Demonstrate a strong record of success in improving academic achievement in literacy.
4. Demonstrate a strong record of success in improving academic achievement for English Language Learners.

## **Background**

MNPS is the 42<sup>nd</sup> largest urban school district in the nation. The consolidated city-county district covers Nashville and Davidson County, an area of about 525 square miles.

MNPS is a vast and diverse school system, serving students from more than 120 different countries, speaking almost as many languages. MNPS has evolved into one of the most racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse school districts in the country. The district is comprised of 171 schools, serving more than 85,000 students.

The school district is led by a nine-member elected Board and its appointed Director of Schools. The Board provides leadership and policy direction to MNPS. Funds for the system's operation are approved and provided by the Metropolitan Nashville City Council, as the Board has no taxing authority. Based on a solid foundation of excellence, MNPS has taken public education into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with zeal, integrity, creativity, and with growing support of, and collaboration with, city leaders and stakeholders.

The MNPS charter schools serve approximately 13% of the District's students. In the past six years, growth in charter capacity has been rapid and of high quality. During this important initial phase of the district's high-performing schools strategy, the Office of Charter Schools has developed consistent and strong authorizing practices aligned with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers' (NACSA) Principles and Standards, found at [www.qualitycharters.org/publications-resources/principles-standards.html](http://www.qualitycharters.org/publications-resources/principles-standards.html). MNPS has demonstrated the ability to cultivate strong new schools, support their integration into district strategy and facilities, and deploy them to meet the district needs for capacity, quality, and academic excellence. Tough decisions, whether to deny popular but incomplete applications, or revoke charters when schools do not meet ambitious academic performance targets, have also been a part of this important work. The stage is set for deeper strategic integration of new schools through this approach to quality authorizing.

The 2018 Application Cycle comes at the nexus of important work to define and compare academic performance across schools, the value of highly effective instruction in diverse and personalized settings, and the maturation of several high performing start-up schools. MNPS seeks and will authorize new schools with the capacity to operate excellent organizations and drive significant academic gains for all students.

The ambitious goals are supported by the common performance measures that apply equally across all schools in the district regardless of type. The Academic Performance Framework (APF) (not included here as it is under review) balances benchmarked results in student growth, achievement, gap closure, school culture, and college/career readiness to report on annual school performance.

**\*APF Performance Status for Charter Schools with 1 or More Years of Data**

School	Overall Performance							
	2013 Total Pts	2013 Status	2014 Total Pts	2014 Status	2015 Total Pts	2015 Status	3-Year Avg Pts	3-Year Status
Smithson-Craighead Academy	19.61	Target	46.66	Satisfactory	10.97	Target	25.75	Review
KIPP Academy	78.59	Excelling	68.30	Excelling	68.84	Excelling	71.91	Excelling
LEAD Academy	34.66	Satisfactory	26.31	Review	73.67	Excelling	44.88	Satisfactory
New Vision Academy	53.50	Satisfactory	74.81	Excelling	86.28	Excelling	71.53	Excelling
Liberty Collegiate Academy	86.03	Excelling	86.71	Excelling	76.50	Excelling	83.08	Excelling
STEM Prep Academy	79.26	Excelling	79.94	Excelling	49.21	Satisfactory	70.43	Excelling
Nashville Prep School	77.77	Excelling	79.97	Excelling	48.28	Satisfactory	68.67	Excelling
East End Prep		Insufficient Data		Insufficient Data		Insufficient Data		
Cameron College Prep	26.47	Review	73.19	Excelling	35.86	Satisfactory	45.17	Satisfactory
Knowledge Academy	64.43	Achieving	70.72	Excelling	26.28	Review	53.81	Satisfactory
LEAD Prep			73.42	Excelling	62.13	Achieving		
KIPP College Prep			70.93	Excelling	39.32	Satisfactory		
Nashville Classical		Insufficient Data		Insufficient Data		Insufficient Data		
Valor Collegiate					94.00	Excelling		
Purpose Preparatory		Insufficient Data		Insufficient Data		Insufficient Data		
Intrepid Prep			71.06	Excelling	79.15	Excelling		
Rocketship TN					44.12	Satisfactory		
Academy of Computer Science					81.80	Excelling		

**\*NOTE – the Academic Performance Framework is in the process of revision due to the new ESSA guidance from our state.**

MNPS views school performance and diversity of enrollment as critical factors of success flowing from its vision. Schools are also assessed according to the diversity of their enrollment using the framework adopted in the Board’s Diversity Management Plan (see **Appendix A**). The diversity framework promotes equity and excellence by analyzing racial diversity as well as socioeconomic needs, special needs, and English Learner enrollments in each school. Nashville’s diversity is an asset that our schools strive to embrace alongside our pursuit of academic excellence. We believe that neither the full value of academic excellence nor diversity is realized in the absence of the other.

**Diversity Category  
Distribution for all MNPS Schools (2015-16)**

Tier	Diverse	Non-Diverse
<b>Elementary</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Middle</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>73</b>

MNPS charter schools must develop and implement diversity plans that are consistent

with the goals and measures in the District's plan, and applications are reviewed for the quality of their plans as well as the impact of those plans on the overall district diversity strategy. Proposals must be specific concerning recruiting and enrollment strategies that will result in a diverse school as outlined in the district's Diversity Management Plan (**Appendix A**).

Since 2009, charter school growth in MNPS has been strong. Charter schools operate under strict accountability and are recommended to the Board of Education for revocation any time their three-year status on the Academic Performance Framework is in Target (red) status, or the school is included on the State of Tennessee's Priority List for schools performing in the bottom 5% of achievement statewide (based on the state-calculated success rate composed of a 3-year average of Reading/Language Arts, Math, and Science proficiency rates). Likewise, charter schools are expected to maintain exemplary and transparent financial practices, sound organizational policies and processes, and compliance with applicable health and safety laws. Charter schools in MNPS are expected to provide equal access to students with disabilities and English Language Learners just the same as district-run schools. Because of this expectation and commitment, the rates of inclusion in Nashville's schools have remained strong.

MNPS issues this guidance for new schools in order to advance the best interests of the students of Davidson County, thus expanding the accessible opportunities for academic excellence and diversity available to families and students. Decisions regarding location, facility plans, and transportation plans represent formal commitments that will be evaluated for their ability to contribute to the clear and ambitious goals set by the MNPS Board of Education. All applications will be evaluated according to the quality of the education plan, financial management and business plan, operational plan and overall capacity in order to determine whether the sponsor organization demonstrates clear evidence of its ability to deliver high quality educational opportunities, build a sustainable institution capable of serving students as outlined in its application, and is of clear and compelling benefit to the community. Applicants who demonstrate this strong capacity for success will also be evaluated on their ability to advance the best interests of students, the district, and the community of Nashville.

The Tennessee Charter Law provides that districts may authorize charters that are in the "best interests of the pupils, school district, or community", (TCA §49-13-108). MNPS issues this annual guidance for quality schools in order to clarify and define what the MNPS strategic vision seeks to advance. Our vision is that **Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools will provide every student with the foundation of knowledge, skills, and character necessary to excel in higher education, work, and life. We embrace and value a diverse student population and community. Different perspectives and backgrounds form the cornerstone of our strong public education system.**

### **Additional Guiding Indicators**

MNPS encourages all charter school applicants who wish to open schools in 2019 to **identify independent facilities**. Regardless of where applicants propose to locate, all applicants responding to this guidance will address how their proposed school will directly benefit the students and families in the community (ies) they seek to serve. It is the responsibility of a successful new school to actively draw on local assets and contribute to the life of the community in which they locate. Successful applicants will demonstrate strong ties to the particular community in which their proposed school will be located and provide evidence of parent and community demand and support. Partnerships with parents, community and faith-based organizations, local residents, and other stakeholders are a valuable component of the new school development process. Prioritizing community engagement enables new school developers to effectively provide the most comprehensive and relevant educational opportunities to their respective student populations.

Schools that do not serve the best interest of the students, the district, or the community, or that lack a strong facility plan and commitment deadline will be recommended for denial. The district may utilize its facility capacity to attract and support strong school operators to develop, but such discussions do not constitute a right to occupy a particular facility, and we reserve the right to seek additional capacity through the charter application process in order to meet the needs of a growing district enrollment.

## Process and Requirements for Charter School Applicants

### Letter of Intent

Applicants are required to submit a letter of intent (LOI) to both MNPS and the State of Tennessee 60 days prior to submitting a completed application on **April 2, 2018**. The deadline for the 2017 application review cycle is **February 1, 2018**. Only those applicants submitting a complete letter of intent on or before **February 1, 2017** will be eligible to submit full proposals for the 2017 application cycle. (see the state website for details concerning what is to be included in the LOI).

**All letters of intent become public record after submission to MNPS. Submission of a proposal is an official waiver of confidentiality, notwithstanding any statements to the contrary that may be contained within the proposal, or in any other notifications submitted by the proposer.**

### Application Logistics

The proposal must follow the Charter School Application as found on the State of Tennessee website (<http://www.tn.gov/education/topic/charter-schools>). The application clearly describes the sections that apply to new starts and replications. Applicants should look closely at the application scoring rubric, also found on the State of Tennessee website. The scoring rubric clearly outlines the criteria under which each section will be evaluated by reviewers.

**Full application proposals are due on Monday, April 2, 2018 by no later than 4:30 p.m. CT. MNPS will not accept any proposals received before or after this date. Late or incomplete applications will be returned at the applicant's expense or will be destroyed after 30 days. Applications must be accompanied by a \$2,500.00 application fee made out to the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. In the event an application is insufficient and returned to the applicant without review, the fee will be returned.**

**All submitted proposals become public record after submission to MNPS. Submission of a proposal is an official waiver of confidentiality, notwithstanding any statements to the contrary that may be contained within the proposal, or in any other notifications submitted by the proposer.**

- Applications must include sections and numbering that align with and correspond to each set of questions found on the application. Full proposals should include a table of contents noting the page number on which each section and each appendix begins.
- **One electronic (pdf) and five (5) hard copies of the application are required.** The electronic copy is considered the master copy in the event of discrepancies, and may be submitted through e-mail, flash drive, or



Drop Box. E-mailed proposals should be submitted to Carol Swann at [Carol.Swann@mnps.org](mailto:Carol.Swann@mnps.org). Hard copies should be submitted to Carol Swann at this address:

Carol Swann  
Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education  
Office of Innovation, Suite C404  
2601 Bransford Avenue  
Nashville, TN 37204

- Applicants should copy each question as posed on the application at the beginning of each section, and sub-sections should be clearly referenced in the answers. The questions may be in smaller font if preferred to save space. Each section, sub-section and appendix should be tabbed, labeled, and inserted into a three-ring binder. **(NOTE: Loose applications, or those not in binders, will be sent back to the applicant without review).**
- Applications must be typed with at least 1-inch page margins and no smaller than 11 point font (suggested fonts are Times New Roman, Ariel, or Calibri).
- Applications must not exceed 350 pages including appendices, but excluding the budget document and the diversity plan.
- Pages should be numbered consecutively.
- Appendix items should be clearly labeled at the top and bottom of the page citing the title of the appendix and the section of the proposal to which it corresponds.
- Applicant must be a 501(c)(3) non-profit, or submit evidence that they have applied for such status as per Tennessee Charter Law.
- Each governing body resume should be labeled with the individual's affiliation with the proposed school (e.g. design team, founding Board member, treasurer, etc.) **Note: It is suggested that resumes be no more than 1-2 pages so the page restrictions can be observed.**
- If a specific question does not apply to the proposed school, please respond "Not Applicable" , with a rationale explaining why that particular question does not apply to your organization.
- Spell out all acronyms the first time they are mentioned in the application.
- Do not assume that reviewers are familiar with all of the organizations, programs, service providers, curricula, vendors, etc., referenced in your application. Please provide descriptions either in the text or in a footnote.
- When citing research studies, or articles, please include full citations in a footnote or separate reference section. **Research should be current and relevant to the premises outlined in the application.**
- Replicators should provide links to their original applications. It is highly likely that the reviewers who are evaluating the application to expand an existing school are not the same ones who reviewed the original application. Providing access to the original application gives some context to the current one.

Proposals will be checked for completeness to ensure all components of the application have been thoroughly addressed and all required attachments have been provided.

**Applications missing components or required attachments may not be considered for further review.**

The following constitutes a complete submission:

- All required questions in the state charter application have been addressed
- All attachments have been provided
- Required financial documents on the correct forms provided by the state have been attached
- Diversity Plan is included
- Required formatting as described in this application guidance has been followed
- Required application fee is attached
- Required number of bound copies have been submitted

## **Application Review**

The application review consists of an evaluation of the application as submitted and an interview with the prospective applicant and their proposed governing board. The district has 90 calendar days from April 2 to submit recommendations to the MNPS Board of Education and for the Board to vote on those recommendations. Please note the exact timeline outlined in this guidance.

The application review will include the following steps:

- 1) Each application will be reviewed by the Executive Officer of Charter Schools and the Coordinator of Charter Schools independently using the appropriate forms. The applications will be reviewed for:
  - Academic Plan Capacity
  - Operational Plan Capacity
  - Financial/Business Plan Capacity
  - Evidence of overall capability to open and sustain long-term a high quality learning environment that offers opportunities to all students
- 2) The Executive Officer of Charter Schools and the Coordinator of Charter Schools will review their initial evaluations together and compile a consensus report that highlights areas and questions for external reviewers to probe more deeply.
- 3) Each charter application will also be reviewed by a core team of at least three (3) independent reviewers. Each reviewer will complete a separate evaluation report and submit it to the Office of Charter Schools.
- 4) Legal/technical review of specific sections will be undertaken by qualified reviewers with the appropriate expertise. Discipline, finance, special education, 504, and EL will be reviewed by thoroughly trained application evaluators with expertise in those areas. Facilities, transportation, and insurance will similarly be reviewed by reviewers with expertise in those areas.
- 5) The Office of Charter Schools will review the independent reviewers' reports and prepare questions to elicit further specific information during an in-person interview with each applicant and their governing board.
- 6) The purpose of the interview phase is to evaluate the capacity of the leadership team, governing board members, and others in the proposed organization as they address specific questions and/or concerns that have arisen during the review process. Both internal and external reviewers may be added to the interview team as needed. During the interview, the Executive Officer of Charter Schools, the Coordinator of Charter Schools, and the Core Team will ask specific questions to draw out further information and may record sound bites, conclusions, objective strengths, weaknesses and questions for further

consideration when making a recommendation to the MNPS Board of Education.

- 7) At the conclusion of both the written application review and the capacity interview with each applicant, the Office of Charter Schools and the Core Team, in conjunction with the expert satellite reviewers, will reach a consensus recommendation for each applicant.
- 8) The recommendation report will be compiled from the combined analysis of this entire process and presented to the MNPS Board of Education for their review and vote on each application presented.

**It is important for applicants to remember that strength in one area of the application does not negate weaknesses in other areas. Every area (Academic Plan, Operational Plan, Financial Plan, and Evidence of Capacity) must meet or exceed standard to be recommended for approval to the MNPS Board of Education.**

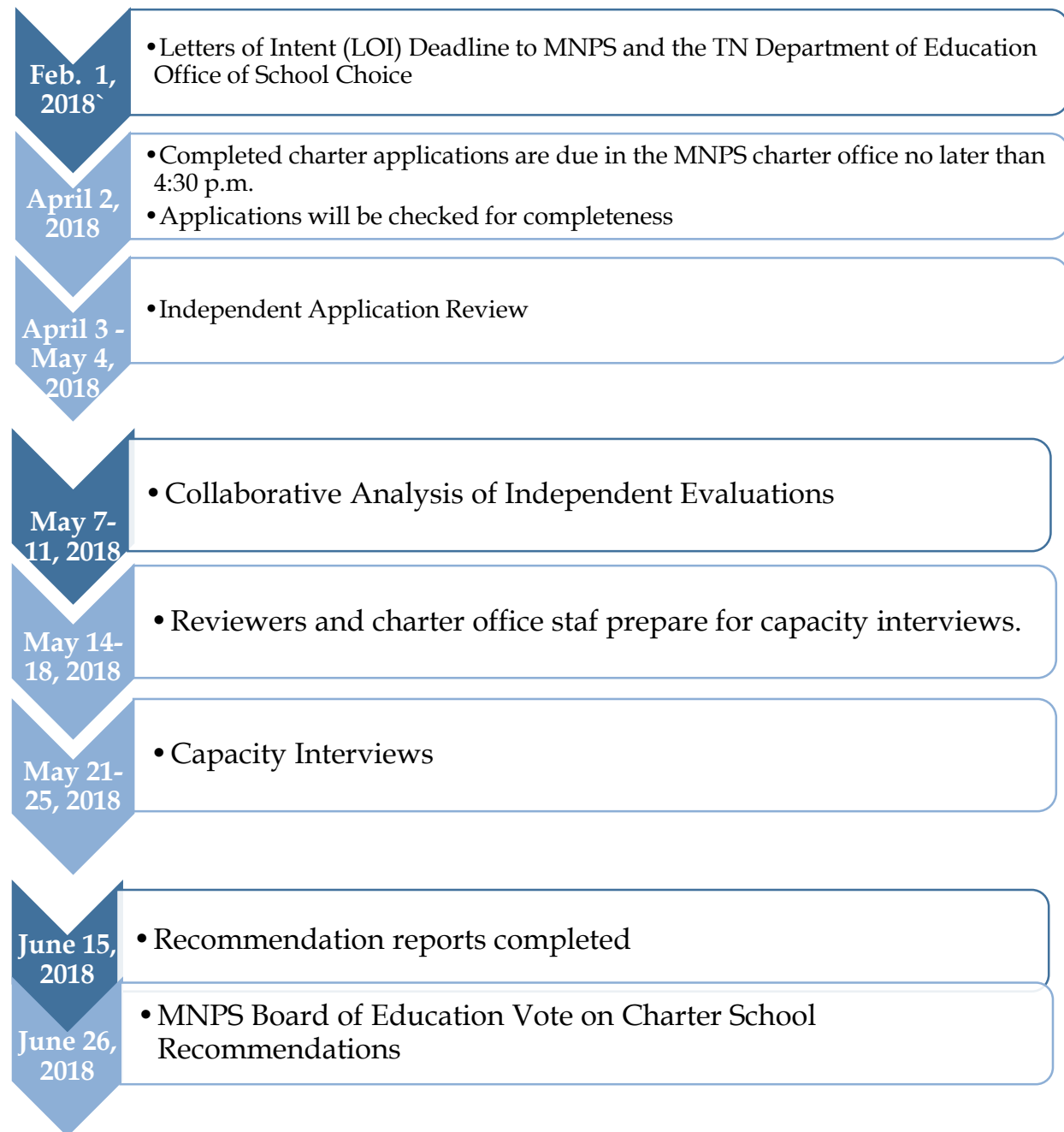
**The standards are specifically outlined in each section of the scoring rubric.**

- 9) Tennessee law authorizes consideration of “substantial negative fiscal impact” in decisions to deny charter applications (TCA §49-13-108 (b)). “The local board of education may consider whether the establishment of the charter school will have a substantial negative fiscal impact on the LEA such that authorization of the charter school would be contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community.”

In order to assist the MNPS Board of Education with consideration of “substantial negative fiscal impact,” the Office of Charter Schools will make its presentation of the work of the review teams to the Board in the following manner:

- Schools which do not meet or exceed quality thresholds will be recommended for denial on objective grounds, and those grounds will be provided to the Board for its consideration in approving or rejecting those recommendations.
- Administration will continue to articulate the per school fiscal impact of all new schools proposed so the Board may consider the possibility that new schools, if approved, would carry substantial, negative fiscal impact (be unaffordable).
- Administration will rank order applications recommended for approval so Board members may take potential approvals one-by-one in descending order of need and determine, as a Board, the threshold beyond which further approval constitutes substantial negative fiscal impact.

## Timeline for Submission of Application for a Charter School Opening in 2019



## Process and Timeline for Amending Applications Denied in the First Application Round

TCA 49-13-108(3) gives applicants 30 days from the date of receipt of grounds for denial to submit an amended application to correct the deficiencies. The MNPS Board of Education then has 30 days after the receipt of the amended application to either deny or approve the application based on the recommendation of the review teams.

The same review team that read and made recommendations on the initial application will evaluate the amended applications to determine if the deficiencies have been corrected and make a recommendation to the MNPS Board of Education to either approve or deny the application.

The following guidelines apply to the resubmissions:

- Amended applications will be due to the Office of Charter Schools on July 26, 2018 by 4:30 p.m. **Amended applications will not be accepted prior to or after that date.**
- Corrections may be made only to those areas of the application that the review teams have deemed deficient. A **complete re-write of the application will not be accepted.**
- One electronic copy and five (5) written copies will be submitted – these should be the same applications submitted previously with changes outlined or shaded so the review team will be able to see all corrections easily.
- A table of contents should be submitted with page numbers so corrected work can be found quickly. It should be clear to reviewers the changes made, where they are located, and which area of the application they replace.
- Additional information will not be accepted after July 27, 2018 unless the review team specifically requests it.
- The same review team that evaluated the application during the first round will evaluate the amended application.

## Amended Application Timeline

